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ABSTRACT

This article summarizes a study of the parenting behaviors that men and women from 3 age groups (ages 16-34, 35-59, and 60-93 years) considered to be most important or most detrimental for constructive child rearing. A total of 90 male and 90 female residents in rural northern Minnesota and an equal number in rural northwestern Illinois formed the sample. Subjects assigned each parenting behavior to one of 5 parenting dimensions: maturity, love, communication, discipline, and values. Differences in valued parenting behaviors are reported in terms of gender, cohort, and geographic location. Results indicated a general pattern for all dimensions: members of the middle-aged cohort made changes in response to disagreement with the older generation who had reared them. Members of the young cohort built on and extended the changes made by the generation of the middle-aged cohort. Females tended to emphasize changes that led to constructive parenting behaviors more than males did. The amount of formal education appeared to be positively correlated with constructive parenting. Related materials are appended. (GLR)

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Cohort, Gender, and Geographic Differences in Parenting Values

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Abstract

Two geographic samples, each one hundred eighty rural Caucasian men and women between 16 and 93 years of age, individually listed parenting behaviors they believe most important to accomplish or to avoid in child-rearing. In each geographic sample (Minnesota and Illinois), the 180 questionnaires consisted of thirty from each gender within three cohorts (ages 16-34, 35-59, and 60-93), half of each sample listing constructive child-rearing practices and half listing destructive practices. Each behavior was assigned by two counseling psychologists (0.97 interrater reliability) to one of five parenting dimensions: Maturity, love, communication, discipline, and values. Gender, cohort, and geographic differences in parenting behaviors valued for rearing sons and daughters are reported. Differences and similarities across cohorts and gender reflect societal change.

Introduction

This article summarizes a study of parenting behaviors considered by men and women of three age groups in two states to be most important, to accomplish or to avoid, for constructive child-rearing.

Method

Ninety male and ninety female residents in rural northern Minnesota, and an equal number in rural northwestern Illinois, individually listed parenting behaviors they believe are the most constructive or most destructive child-rearing behaviors. Subjects were selected from three age groups: Elderly (60-93), middle-aged (35-59), and young (16-34). Each age group in each of the two samples contained sixty subjects: thirty males and thirty females. They were recruited from public places (senior-citizens' centers, college classes, etc.) and residences (homes, apartment buildings, nursing homes, and college dormitories). Minimal demographic data were taken. (See Table 1.)

Insert Table 1 about here.

Half of the respondents were asked to list constructive behaviors; half, destructive. Half of each group of respondents were asked to reply in terms of rearing sons; the other half, in terms of rearing daughters. Conditions were assigned on a random basis, so that any respondent had an equal chance of listing constructive or destructive behaviors, concerning either sons or

daughters. Only one respondent was surveyed from any particular family, and no collaboration with spouse or others was permitted. Respondents listed between five and ten behaviors; the mean number in both samples was eight.

Parental behaviors described by respondents were categorized under the five general parenting dimensions of maturity, love, communication, discipline, and values, by two counseling psychologists blind to subject groups. Interrater reliability was 0.97. Parenting behaviors assigned to each dimension are listed in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Results

Demographic Data

The marital status data of the elderly cohort reflects the fact that women as a group live longer than men. The middle-aged and elderly cohorts in the Illinois sample are slightly younger than those in the Minnesota sample. Perhaps in part because of the younger mean age, more middle-aged males in the Illinois than in the Minnesota sample are married; more in the Minnesota sample are separated, divorced, or widowed. More young females in the Minnesota sample remain single than in the Illinois sample. More young males in the Minnesota sample are married than in the Illinois sample, where the majority remain single. More young males from the Illinois sample lost a parent (divorce or death) during childhood.

The young cohort in the Minnesota sample has on the average two more years of college than the Illinois young cohort, which may account for the greater attention to and articulation of concerns generally considered reflective of advanced human development.

Changes in marital status and number of offspring would be expected yet to occur in the young cohort; the divorce rate, for example, can not be compared meaningfully with those of older cohorts.

Parenting Data

Table 3 provides, for each parenting dimension and sample, percentages of parenting behaviors valued by each cohort. Percentages are separated according to gender of respondents and according to whether sons or daughters are being discussed. Results are examined below in terms of quantitative differences and qualitative differences between genders and geographic samples, and across generations.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Quantitative Comparisons

Cohort comparisons

1. In both geographic samples, the three cohorts prioritize the five parenting dimensions more similarly than differently, and most frequently (exceptions are discussed) assign similar amounts of emphasis to each of the five dimensions. Parenting dimensions are prioritized by the elderly as follows:

	Minnesota/Illinois
maturity	34/ 34%
love	26/ 24%
values	17/ 22%
discipline	12/ 10%
communication	11/ 10%
	100/100%

For the middle-aged cohort, priorities are:

love	30/ 31%
maturity	30/ 30%
values	17/ 18%
communication	15/ 12%
discipline	8/ 9%
	100/100%

In the young cohort, priorities are:

love	30/ 30%
maturity	24/ 26%
values	19/ 16%
communication	15/ 15%
discipline	12/ 13%
	100/100%

The exchange in priority of the maturity and love dimensions and the communication and discipline dimensions, and the changes in amount of emphasis placed on each dimension, reflect changes in opinions regarding urgency, importance, awareness, and direction over time, as will be discussed in the qualitative

differences section. Looking only at quantitative results does not reveal much about what is different or similar between genders or geographic locations, or changing across cohorts.

2. There is a steady decrease in emphasis on the maturity dimension--but not general maturity as a goal for either parents or children--for both sexes, almost all age groups, and as applied to both sons and daughters: For male respondents, percentages from the oldest to the youngest generations go from 37/39* to 35/31 to 27/29 for sons and from 34/35 to 28/30 to 20/24 for daughters; for female respondents, percentages go from 35/34 to 30/32 to 23/23 for sons and from 33/30 to 27/27 to 25/24 for daughters. Loving children and rearing them with mature perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, however, remain the two dimensions most emphasized by all three cohorts.

4. There is a small but steady increase in the emphasis placed on communication across most generations for both sexes and for both sons and daughters: For male respondents, percentages from the oldest to the youngest generations go from 10/10 to 17/9 (the 9 is the only exception to the increase) to 16/15 for sons and 12/10 to 13/11 to 15/15 for daughters; for female respondents, percentages go from 10/10 to 14/12 to 15/14 for sons and from 11/11 to 16/16 to 15/15 for daughters.

*Throughout the paper, the number preceding the diagonal (/) is the Minnesota statistic; the number following, Illinois.

Gender comparisons

1. In each cohort, the maturity dimension is mentioned more often for sons than for daughters by male respondents: In the elderly, percentages are 37/39% for sons and 34/35% for daughters; in the middle-aged, percentages are 35/31% and 28/30% respectively; in the young, they are 27/29% and 20/24%. With female respondents from any of the cohorts, there is less to no difference in amount of emphasis placed on maturity parenting behaviors for sons versus daughters. Descriptions of what constitutes parenting in this dimension changes, however, for both male and female respondents across cohorts. (See Qualitative Comparisons.)

2. For rearing daughters, elderly males seldom name parenting behaviors categorized under the dimension of loving children (18/18%), compared with either of the other two male cohorts (32/30% and 32/32%) or any of the female cohorts (26/31, 27/30, and 28/32%). In the Illinois sample only, this reduced number of parenting behaviors in the love dimension is also true for the elderly females responding about parenting sons (only 20%, compared with 29% (middle-aged) and 31% (young). The shift in emphasis for these elderly-cohort respondents is primarily to the values dimension, where they advise parents of daughters (Minnesota and Illinois elderly males) or sons (Illinois elderly females) to behave in certain ways designed to produce individuals with values the cohort and gender believes appropriate.

3. All generations of males stress values parenting behaviors more for daughters (23/27, 21/17, and 23/16%) than for sons (14/19, 14/16, and 16/15%), again with significant content differences by gender of child and by cohort. (See Qualitative Comparisons.) This is also true for the Minnesota female respondents of the elderly and middle-aged cohorts (20% each for daughters versus 10 and 12% for sons).

Geographic comparisons

1. The primary geographic difference is greater frequency in the Minnesota sample of parenting behaviors identifiable as reflective of the most "advanced" human development. (See Qualitative Comparisons.) The values-dimension differences noted below are examples and, even when the percent of statements in any category is similar in both geographic samples, the content is more diversified and developmentally advanced in the Minnesota sample.

2. In the Minnesota sample, middle-aged male respondents show a steep drop in emphasis placed on discipline as a parental responsibility, for both sons (from 12 to 6%) and daughters (from 13 to 6%). This drop occurs in the Illinois sample for female respondents: From 12 to 7% in terms of rearing sons, and, a much smaller drop, from 10 to 9%, in terms of rearing daughters. Again, the descriptions of optimal discipline change across cohorts. (See Qualitative Comparisons.)

3. In both samples, both male and female respondents show consistent concern with the values dimension in terms of rearing

daughters. In terms of rearing sons, however, Minnesota female respondents show a steady (10 to 12 to 19%) increase in emphasis on values parenting for rearing sons. As noted above, the initial increase between the elderly and the middle-aged cohorts, then the sizable increase between the middle-aged and young generations of women both involve specific, diversified, and developmentally advanced content. This increasing emphasis across Minnesota female cohorts on greater personal sensitivity, significant rejection of stereotypes, and development of a social conscience in terms of rearing sons, is seldom mentioned by male respondents in any cohort (until, as noted in the values discussion in Qualitative Comparisons below, the young male Minnesota cohort begins to acknowledge the possibility of at least increased sensitivity, psychological availability, and true relationship intimacy in male parenting behaviors), or by any Illinois female cohort.

4. In the Illinois sample, male respondents consistently stress the values dimension more for daughters (27, 17, and 16%) than for sons (19, 16, and 15%). Content differences reflect the greater exhorting regarding daughters by elderly males described in the Qualitative Comparisons values discussion below. Illinois female respondents, on the other hand, emphasize the values parenting dimension more for rearing sons (24, 20, and 23%) than for daughters (18, 18, and 16%), with little content difference. The greater frequency of statements in the values dimension reflects a greater need and urgency perceived by female

respondents for rearing sons, not a belief that sons and daughters should be reared differently in terms of values.

5. In the Illinois sample, the frequency of statements in the values dimension slowly declines across cohorts, for both male and female respondents and for both sons and daughters, as emphasis on religious indoctrination (versus religious freedom) gradually declines; however, none of the cohorts and neither gender in the Illinois sample matches the Minnesota sample in frequency of statements of recognition of principles of universal relevance such as absence or presence of a social conscience.

Qualitative Comparisons

Changes across cohorts in these samples include both increases and decreases in amount of emphasis placed on each of the five parenting dimensions (quantitative differences), and differing perspectives on the dimensions themselves and the parenting behaviors believed to be optimal within them (qualitative differences). The following paragraphs summarize gender, cohort, and geographic qualitative comparisons along the maturity, love, communication, discipline, and values dimensions as delineated in Table 2. In the Discussion section, these results are explicated as each of the dimensions is examined according to gender of respondents, gender of children being parented, and cohort and geographic location of respondents. Quotations are directly from respondent questionnaires.

Maturity

All cohorts stress the importance of the first and second

parenting behaviors listed in Table 2, although the elderly cohort defines responsibility for both parents and children differently from how the two succeeding cohorts do. The middle-aged cohort adds the final two listed behaviors and especially emphasizes the third. The young cohort continues support for the behaviors recommended by the middle-aged cohort, and adds the fourth and fifth ones. In general, male and female respondents agree in the views representing their respective cohorts, and for both sons and daughters, although males tend to emphasize their importance more for sons.

Love

All cohorts stress the importance of the fourth and last parenting behaviors listed in the love dimension in Table 2. The middle-aged cohort, primarily the female respondents, adds and emphasizes the first through third behaviors. The young cohort, as in the maturity dimension, recommends the same parenting behaviors favored by the middle-aged cohort, and--primarily the male respondents--adds the fifth, sixth, and seventh parenting behaviors in this dimension.

Communication

This is a dimension with considerable variety. The elderly cohort most often considers "communication" telling children what to do, be, believe, even feel. The middle-aged cohort sharply increases pleas for greater communication between parents and children but offers few specific recommendations. Females in the middle-aged cohort especially encourage expression of emotions by

all family members. It is the young cohort, especially the males, who specify--and frequently--all parenting behaviors listed in the communication dimension in T~ble 2. The emphasis is strong on the responsibility of parents to rear sons as well as daughters with communication awareness and abilities. Female respondents in the young cohort especially emphasize honesty in the expression of feelings.

Discipline

The elderly cohort is in favor of the third and fourth parenting behaviors listed in Table 2. The middle-aged cohort agrees, and begins to draw attention to a need to treat sons and daughters similarly and to the first and second parenting behaviors in the table. The middle-aged cohort especially rejects being too harsh with discipline. The young cohort agrees with the parenting behaviors recommended by the two previous cohorts and emphasizes the first two and final two parenting behaviors listed. This young cohort adds the recognition of developmental and situational distinctions, and the importance of avoiding indirect as well as direct external control of children if self-control and self-discipline are intended. The young cohort, as in other dimensions, consistently reveals the need for careful appraisal of the situation and individuals involved, thoughtful and sensitive response according to the potentials within the situation and individuals, and balance rather than extremes.

Values

When the first parenting behavior listed in this category in Table 2 is mentioned by the elderly or middle-aged cohort, it is almost exclusively only in connection with organized religion. The recognition of other values in a personal value system almost never occurs until the young cohort. All cohorts agree that the second parenting behavior in the values dimension in Table 2 is important. The elderly cohort usually favors the right side of the final three behaviors listed; the middle-aged cohort recommends parenting behaviors according to the left side of the fifth and sixth listed behaviors (the final two), although it is only the fifth behavior that is frequently mentioned by the middle-aged cohort. The fifth behavior, avoiding sex-role biases and stereotypes, is the parenting behavior most often recommended in this dimension for the middle-aged cohort. Especially in the Minnesota sample, it is the young cohort who adds and stresses the remaining parenting behaviors in Table 2 (the first and third listed). This cohort--both males and females--also promotes exchanging gender handicapping for equality more intensely than any other single parenting behavior. In addition, at least in the Minnesota sample, both males and females in this cohort make other very high-level contributions (see Discussion) to the values dimension. The intensity with which they are committed to these high-level values, coupled with the commitment to open, honest communication in the communication dimension, suggests that they will not choose silence or nonaction in terms of parenting behaviors related to values.

Discussion

Maturity

With a fourth or more of all recommendations devoted to this dimension, maturity parenting is clearly important to both genders and all three cohorts in both geographic samples, for rearing both sons and daughters. For both geographic samples, maturity parenting behaviors are almost always stressed more by male than by female respondents, and almost always more with regard to rearing sons than daughters.

Beginning with the middle-aged cohort, less emphasis is placed on the maturity dimension by both genders and across both the middle-aged and the young cohorts, in both geographic samples, as respondents shift to place greater emphasis on loving parental behaviors, and on communication, for rearing both sons and daughters. The young cohort shifts some of the intensity placed by previous generations on the maturity dimension to, for male respondents, constructive discipline and values, and, for females, constructive discipline for daughters and values for sons.

The switch between the elderly and the middle-aged in the content of this dimension is primarily (1) from seeking obedience, conformity, and dependence in children to seeking personal decision-making, individuality, and independence, and (2) from controlling and monitoring children to guiding and facilitating them. This is a radical change in values and in processes put into effect by the middle-aged cohort and

continues, extended but unchanged in direction, in the young cohort.

Recommendations made by the elderly reveal several beliefs that the middle-aged and young generations apparently do not hold, at least to the same profound degree, and these beliefs are reflected in the responses of the elderly cohort in the other parenting dimensions as well: (1) Where there is parent-child disagreement, the elderly believe parents really do know what is best for children and children do not; (2) they also believe it is a parental responsibility to make the choices for children because, if children choose for themselves, they will choose what is wrong, detrimental, or harmful; (3) the elderly believe that allowing children only the experiences parents believe appropriate will lead to responsible (as defined by this cohort) behavior in children from the sheer weight of conditioning, and to rejection of anything different as fearful and alien (a desirable outcome for this cohort); and (4) they believe internalization of parental ideals and teachings (Eriksonian foreclosure) will take place automatically because of the strong need children feel for parental approval. Nearly every elderly respondent stresses "making" children "respect" and/or "be grateful to" their parents as an important parental behavior. They consider not following their recommendations to be neglect or indifference toward children and a failure in parental responsibility.

Especially in the Minnesota sample, the middle-aged cohort

objects to both these outcomes and these methods. In terms of outcome, this cohort wants children to feel competent, autonomous, and self-reliant, not dependent, compliant, and conforming. Parenting behaviors stressed by the middle-aged cohort in the maturity dimensions most often emphasize developing personal competence and autonomy in children. Whereas the elderly say parents should "teach children to obey orders," "make them listen to their parents," and "teach them my ideas," the middle-aged cohort says parents should "encourage and support their independence," "allow them to make important choices for themselves," and "let them make their own decisions." Self-selection of behavior is very important to the middle-aged cohort, especially in male respondents' recommendations for rearing sons; the males in the middle-aged cohort do not often make these recommendations for rearing daughters.

In contrast to the elderly's lists of what parents should make children do or not do, the middle-aged cohort suggests parental responsibilities that make it possible for parents to guide and facilitate personal development in children rather than seeking only to control their behavior and make them conform to parental choices. These recommendations ("display coping skills," "deal with problems constructively," "prepare them to go on their own by giving them the abilities needed," etc.) acknowledge an area almost never addressed by the elderly cohort.

It is not that the middle-aged cohort wants children to have less responsibility for appropriate behavior. They want instead

for parents to help children develop their capacities for responsible behavior, believing that children are likely to choose responsible behavior, rather than making (or even encouraging) them to do blindly what they are told. The middle-aged cohort recommends these processes whether or not the resulting behaviors in the children are the same from both methods of child-rearing. The cohorts are in basic agreement as to what constitutes responsible behavior; here it is method of effecting it to which the middle-aged cohort takes exception.

How is the young cohort similar to and different from the generation who reared them? At least for the Minnesota sample, the focus on individuality, personal autonomy and competence, and a facilitating parental role continues. This cohort, like the middle-aged generation, insists on the right to self-selection of behavior to reflect personal choice. In addition, however, there is a new emphasis on a parental responsibility to facilitate the development of critical thinking in children to enable to them to make wise personal choices.

The middle-aged cohort drives home the importance of allowing development of the self-initiating, autonomous individual; however, they do not go beyond insisting on the right of personal choice to the young cohort's recognition of the potential within children to develop critical-thinking faculties and, as noted by the young cohort in the love, communication, and values dimensions, the affective and moral development that the young cohort recognizes are possible in children.

As revealed in this dimension and in others, the young cohort considers children to have much more capacity for higher levels of development and more abstract conceptual and behavioral abilities than either previous cohort. Furthermore, this is the first cohort to recognize the importance of, and address the parental responsibility of encouraging, independence appropriate to the maturity level of the child. This generation sees mature parenting as frequently involving questions of when and how much, not as all-or-nothing decisions. They indicate that it requires skill in parents to be able to understand particular situations and the level of development of the individuals involved in responding.

According to the young cohort, parents should encourage the child's own problem-solving according to his or her abilities. What they believe that parents should provide, if anything, are not solutions but encouragement and opportunities--opportunities for constructive responses currently in the child's repertoire (but without deciding what they should be), for the development of potential for other responses that may be needed (again, without deciding what they should be), for extending flexibility of responses (once more, without deciding which ones), etc. Skills and responsibilities in this dimension are complemented by those the young cohort recommends in other dimensions, such as encouraging the expression of feelings when decisions and choices are needed or made, making choices believed of universal validity rather than for selfish interests, and so forth.

This is vastly different from the elderly cohort's insistence on parents' mainly making children "behave," "work for you," "mind," and "respect their elders," and additional to the middle-aged cohort's, "Don't try to run their lives," and "Let them make their own choices." The young cohort asks that parents "'tailor' parental response to the individual," "give confidence so they can conquer their own problems," "promote autonomy by letting the child know he can do things," "help them develop responsible decision-making," and "allow freedom consistent with development."

The unusually frequent mention of the need for parents to "let go" suggests the strongest difference of opinion between the middle-aged and young cohorts in the maturity dimension: "Let them go when they are ready," "let them grow up," "let go when the time is right," "let go when it is time," "parents need to know when to let go," etc.

Like the middle-aged cohort, the young cohort does not seek to require less responsible behavior of children than the elderly cohort, as critics of various young generations have been wont to claim at times. This cohort is as strongly in support of "the work ethic" and other values traditionally ascribed to our pioneering generation as the elderly and the middle-aged cohorts are. In a way, they suggest facilitating even more maturity in children by promoting equality within the parent-child effort as soon as developmental levels permit in any area, in contrast to older views of the parents' doing something to or for children

which actually keeps children immature when they are capable not only of doing for themselves but also of participating in the decision-making process.

Another example of qualitative change in the Minnesota young cohort has to do with the parental desire and responsibility to ensure the best education possible for their children. All generations mention this parental responsibility; however, whereas the elderly and middle-aged cohorts say that parents should make sure children "get a good education" or "go on past high school," the Minnesota young cohort says parents should "support the child in learning throughout life." It is an entirely different concept to encourage and help provide for expansion in perspectives and attitudes and a variety of experiences, rather than simply more of an amount of some one thing such as number of years of formal education. The reasonableness of the belief in the existence of potential for higher levels of cognitive, affective, and moral development in children is supported by the obvious capacities this Minnesota young-cohort generation has for them. The young cohort, however, is the first to assert parental responsibility for facilitating them. These capacities are also reflected in their content in other dimensions.

Love

This dimension is another one of uniform importance to each cohort, both genders, and, with the exception of both samples' elderly males' discussing rearing daughters and Illinois elderly

females' discussing rearing sons, for rearing both sons and daughters. The area more stressed by elderly males for rearing daughters was the values dimension, emphasizing heavy exhorting of daughters, rather than parenting behaviors listed under loving them. One change over time in both geographic samples is the significant increase in importance assigned by middle-aged and young males to parenting behaviors in the love dimension for rearing daughters.

There are two major changes in love-dimension content between the elderly and middle-aged cohorts. One involves the recognition by the middle-aged cohort of the importance of understanding developmental issues and limitations. Although they do not mention or apply this concept in the maturity dimension, their recommendations in the love dimension show clear recognition of it and its value here. In other words, the middle-aged cohort does not seem to recognize the usefulness of gradations in applications and methods of choice, decision-making, problem-solving, etc., but does recognize that children need different amounts and kinds of loving behaviors as they develop. This is a change from the elderly cohort, who seem unaware that children are not either whatever parents decide they are or simply smaller adults. The elderly cohort in both geographic samples does not seem to recognize that children often have different perceptions, needs, and responses from those typical of adults.

The elderly indicate that their recommended behaviors are

part of loving children, and that not following their recommendations would indicate not caring for or indifference to the child. There is no reason to believe they are not motivated by love; however, the behaviors recommended were often not experienced as being loving behaviors by the children, as represented in the recommendations of the middle-aged cohort.

For example, "teach them [daughters] to do housework and take care of other children--when they become mothers, this will help them" shows no recognition of the fact that this is often not perceived as helpful, instructive, or loving by girls assigned these experiences; or the fact that the lack of perceived personal relevance at the time would be expected to make absorption of any but the most mechanical lessons or experiences unlikely; or the fact that the child may have more important and urgent needs or neglected potential; or the fact that it may be beyond the child's current abilities so that she may fail with potentially serious consequences and/or feel overwhelmed or inadequate or mistreated with resulting low self-esteem and fear of or rejection of future experiences.

The middle-aged cohort is not against this recommendation <u>per se</u>; again, it is a question of developmental readiness and appropriateness for the child involved, and what kinds and how much responsibility would be given. Of course a young girl could feel loved in this situation, be interested in it, agree that practice-mothering can be useful training, or even feel honored at being given that responsibility regardless of how well she may

handle it, if she is developmentally mature enough to be interested in it as a learning opportunity she would choose, or to perceive that these are meanings her parents attach to the situation and want to do it for their sake, or to feel confident in her abilities to handle the tasks regardless of anyone's reasons for her doing them, etc. The protests of the females and sometimes the males from the middle-aged cohort indicate, however, that this is not often the case. (See also the self-discipline discussion in the discipline section as a similar example of cohort differences in conceptualization.)

Another example is the frequent recommendation of the elderly cohort for inviting their children's friends into the home. The purpose, for the elderly cohort, is to monitor and control the amount and kind of contact the child will be allowed to have with those children. To the elderly cohort, that is what a caring parent does, because children are believed incapable of making accurate judgments or wise decisions, or disinclined to make them. Both other cohorts also recommend opening the home to children's friends; however, the middle-aged cohort usually suggests it is for helping the child understand and respond constructively within interpersonal situations, and cautions parents not to try to choose their children's friends. They seem to see this area as one in which developmental issues are important to recognize for skilled parenting to result.

The young cohort usually suggests that parents make children's friends feel welcome in their home simply to accept

and be friendly toward their children's friends. For the young cohort, also aware of the applicability of developmental issues, if a parent does not agree with the children's values or behaviors, the loving parent sets rules for behaviors within the parents' home or when their children are among the friends, hopefully with the participation of their children and their friends in rule-setting, consequence-determination, and discussion of feelings about the situation and rules.

The other major change in content between the elderly and middle-aged cohorts in the love parenting dimension is the emphasis the latter places on a parental responsibility to tolerate a child's mistakes and support a child in failure. Far from the elderly's frequent exhortation to "push children to excel in everything they do," the middle-aged cohort rejects "too much pressure," "emphasis on success," and "pushing kids to excel" when these behaviors set children up for defeat because developmental limits or the uncontrollability of some outcomes is not recognized by parents.

The elderly cohort seems to see the push for "success" as a loving behavior, and to believe that setting a standard of excellence for children should be perceived by children as a parental behavior to be highly prized. The middle-aged cohort instead recommends being proud of children and encouraging their self-respect for whatever they are and try to do that the parent can value, regardless of outcome ("help them achieve a good self-concept," "make them feel important," "let them be themselves,"

"try to make it possible for them to value themselves," "promote self-esteem"). The middle-aged cohort seems to believe that children will do their best because they want to, not because they are asked to or pushed, and that the greater parental responsibility is to value children for whatever they are and do that the parent can value, including trying, independent of outcome.

In addition to tolerating mistakes and supporting children in failure, some attention is given by the middle-aged cohort to letting children learn from mistakes and giving them confidence in themselves despite mistakes. The young cohort goes even further in encouraging this parental behavior ("be there--not always to bail them out--but listen," "teach them how to lose and feel okay about it," "let them know they don't always have to be in control of every situation," "stress a good win-lose philosophy").

The difference between the recommendations of the middle-aged and young cohorts and those of the elderly cohort as exemplified by "If they get into trouble, it's their problem. I wouldn't help them out of it. They have to suffer" seems to be a belief by the elderly cohort that "trouble" is both foreseeable and avoidable by children, especially if parents have warned them against it, a "logic" that children will usually choose trouble if given a choice so that if they have gotten into trouble they must have chosen to, and a belief that suffering consequences is invariably instructive and therefore ensures no further

transgressions.

The other cohorts share these mis/perceptions at times but also recognize that the number and complexities of mistake-making variables are great and that varieties of growth opportunities exist within mistakes when certain conditions are possible, such as parental acceptance and support. Especially in the young cohort, there is much less of the attitude that things that hurt in part because someone deliberately caused or allowed that pain to occur are justified if the motivation is love, and much more of a definition of love that includes support in adversity or difficulty while reparative or growth opportunities are explored.

Just as in the maturity dimension, the young cohort is more similar to the middle-aged cohort than to the elderly in the love dimension. In addition to accepting and continuing the values of the middle-aged cohort in this dimension, the young cohort adds two new parenting behaviors and supports and adds to two favored by both the elderly and the middle-aged cohorts. The young cohort supports reinforcing children wherever possible; this is a parenting behavior considered loving by all cohorts, although the elderly seems to find few occasions where they feel it is possible. The young cohort agrees that parents should spend time with their children, and adds the modern emphasis on using family time well and on "quality" time as being essential.

In addition, this cohort emphasizes maintaining a loving spousal relationship, adding the importance of genuine loving feelings, not simply pretending love exists when it does not, and

working on the relationship if it is suffering. The young cohort would not value staying helplessly in a destructive marriage as the elderly often did, "for the sake of the children." Instead, they would value working on the problems and the relationship, for the sake of everyone involved. The young cohort of course values "preserving the family" as the elderly cohort does; however, again there is a difference in conceptualization: The young cohort seeks to preserve families by holding family members responsible for their own behavior, communicating their honest feelings, thoughts, and reactions, and putting effort into relationship and problem-solving work. The young cohort holds both parents (not just the female) responsible for fostering and maintaining quality relationships with their children and spouses. They also pay even more attention than the middle-aged cohort to the importance of developmental levels in children in terms of handling well the parental responsibilities of the love dimension. They do seem, however, to fail to recognize the applicability of developmental limitations to parents as well, apparently expecting parents to be developmentally mature simply because they are old enough to be.

The new parental behaviors the young cohort adds, especially in the Minnesota sample, are being psychologically available to children and showing love openly without assuming it is perceived as it is intended. These behaviors require capacities almost never mentioned by the two previous cohorts, although occasional mention is made by them of demonstrating love behaviorally in

some fashion. These parenting behaviors mentioned by the young cohort also require a greater willingness and ability to communicate than either previous cohort reveals in the communication dimension that it has.

The young cohort repeatedly recommends a new emphasis on parental psychological availability, sensitivity, and empathy ("be genuinely interested in them," "participate in their world versus yours," etc.) and shows a major shift from an authority-learner relationship to a person-to-person, quality-based relationship ("share experiences with them," "work on tasks together," and suggestions to share descriptions of parents' childhoods with children and to discuss heavy life stresses, but as shared and explored perspectives, not as lessons or for parental venting).

The attention the young cohort adds in the love dimension to learning and loving through shared experiencing, and the focus on guiding and facilitating, not directing, children, are consistent with recommendations in other dimensions by this cohort. Showing love openly is also heavily promoted by the young cohort in this and in the communication dimension. There are many ways to show love openly; to do so is much more often held by the young than the other cohorts to be crucial for constructive child-rearing.

In the Minnesota sample, the young cohort also adds a social conscience to parental responsibilities in the love dimension--suggesting that being loving and encouraging loving also means concern for all people, exposure to other cultures, commitment to

equality and social justice, and other representations of love for humankind. These concepts and meanings are not mentioned often by this cohort; however, they are almost never addressed by either of the other two cohorts, or by any cohort in the Illinois sample. Although many developmental theories suggest these issues become important to healthy people as they grow older, perhaps the elderly and middle-aged cohorts do not yet perceive them as relating also to bringing up children.

In the Minnesota but not the Illinois sample, the parenting behaviors added to the love dimension by the middle-aged cohort came almost exclusively from the female respondents, and those added by the young cohort came primarily from the male respondents. Young Minnesota males were unique in emphasizing relationship qualities and capacities; this is the first such recognition of possibility or request for such behaviors in males by any male cohort. The new and dramatically different focus on sensitivity and relationship qualities by young Minnesota males shows up again in the communication and values dimensions. Each time it again follows attention by the Minnesota middle-aged cohort (primarily females in the communication dimension; both males and females in the values dimension) to high-level parental development such as emotional openness and commitment to equality.

Communication

Although communication is one of the dimensions least attended to by all cohorts and both sexes, significant

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in content is usually simply acknowledgement that more communication is needed for constructive parenting, without additional information.

In both geographic samples, when male respondents of the middle-aged cohort are specific, which does not occur often, it is to recommend fewer taboo subjects (Minnesota sample) and more verbalizing and showing of feelings (both samples). Middle-aged female respondents much more often recommend the same three changes, especially for rearing sons. Along with considerable advice for parents to show emotions openly ("tell them of your love," "express true feelings," "show affection outright," "show your feelings toward them" "show loving feelings," and "the father's example is especially important"), female respondents in the middle-aged cohort also heavily emphasize the parental responsibility to encourage children to express feelings, again, especially sons ("let them exhibit their feelings," "teach him how to express himself," "tell him it's okay to cry," "don't have him hide his feelings," "don't make him feel he has to hide his feelings," "don't expect sons to deny their emotions," "acknowledge and validate their feelings," and, repeatedly, "encourage him to express his feelings").

In the Minnesota sample, an area not addressed by the middle-aged cohort but sharply contrasted between the elderly and young generations involves the value of sparing children pain by "protecting" them from painful reality. The elderly cohort considers this an important parental responsibility, the middle-

aged cohort does not mention it, and the young cohort takes exception to it. The young cohort frequently emphasizes parenting for "the real world," and uses the word "reality" very often. They repeatedly emphasize that the way to help children experience less pain in a painful situation is to handle the situation with as much sensitivity as possible in communication, behavior, and relationships. The young cohort, like the elderly cohort, wants parents to protect children from pain whenever possible, as a loving behavior; however, they believe that ignoring, denying, hiding, or distorting reality will hurt children and the parent-child relationship worse than facing the reality of both the pain in the situation and the possibilities for constructively responding to it, especially together. This issue is not addressed specifically by any members of the Illinois sample.

In the young cohort, attention to the responsibility for open expression of feeling is continued, by both male and female respondents and for rearing both sons and daughters. The urging from male respondents is as strong in this generation as it is from females in the middle-aged cohort. The other area stressed primarily by the male respondents increases the focus the middle-aged cohort places on parent-child discussion of any subjects.

Frequently in the Minnesota sample and occasionally in the Illinois sample, both male and female respondents in the young cohort add even more focus on being open emotionally oneself, on allowing expression of all emotions (not only love and

affection), and--especially female respondents and only in the Minnesota sample--on being honest with verbal and nonverbal expression of feelings. An additional area emphasized by Minnesota female respondents in the young cohort more than either gender in any cohort is the need to check out others' perceptions in all communication, without assuming anything beforehand.

Discipline

For the elderly cohort, discipline generally consists of setting limits on children's behavior. Quality discipline to them means monitoring and controlling children ("tell them the rules," "stick to them," "say no and mean no," "if you get after them, don't start feeling sorry for them right away and give in," and frequent admonitions to "make them mind"). The elderly cohort also recommends being consistent, having parental agreement on rules and punishments, and using the same rules and punishments for all siblings, at least those of the same sex.

The middle-aged cohort rejects not only the open, often harsh, control, but also the belief that submission to parental wishes is desirable. Middle-aged males, consistent with their protests and reversals of the elderly's views in the maturity dimension, want parents to support children whenever possible. For example, the elderly cohort frequently recommends standing with authorities such as legal or school representatives even when the authorities are wrong, because they believe children must be taught to respect and obey authority. The middle-aged cohort, especially males, recommends standing by children,

defending them as appropriate, and "encouraging them to fight for their rights."

Along with the elderly cohort, the middle-aged cohort also recommends clarity, consistency, impartiality, and parental agreement in discipline. Protests are made against physical abuse.

The young cohort recommends a balance between control and neglect, with as much choice as developmental maturity levels permit for each child, and open family discussion of and participation in decision-making about discipline. In the Minnesota sample, this cohort also recognizes and rejects manipulation and indirect control as much as they and the middle-aged generation reject direct control ("don't implement discipline through guilt trips," "don't try to buy them," "don't use material things to put pressure on them to see things your way"), consistently recommending discussing problems or differences, and suggesting that parents consider children's ideas seriously, not simply pretend to for the purpose of influencing children to perceive the parents as fair or flexible. The responses of the Minnesota young cohort indicate a belief that children want and are most benefitted by self-control, some order in their lives, the comfort of predictability from rules that make sense to them, explanations of purposes and consequences, and discussion of their and their parents' thoughts and feelings.

In addition to recommending open discussion about

discipline, the Minnesota young male cohort sees facilitating self-control and self-discipline as a major parental responsibility. Here the young cohort is most contrasted with the elderly cohort, who also prize what they consider self-discipline--compliance without complaint or visible unhappiness. Congruent with the attitude prevalent in the responses of the elderly cohort that character is built by doing something one does not want to do because it is supposed to be beneficial, the elderly cohort sees self-discipline as emerging from parenting like, "include in a child's activities something which is tedious and requires self-discipline to carry out--e.g., piano lessons." The middle-aged cohort does not address self-discipline specifically.

The Minnesota young cohort, however, recommends more parenting behaviors designed to facilitate self-discipline than parenting behaviors designed to control or direct children: The considerable emphasis they place on communicating with children about discipline, recommendations that parents provide children with opportunities to learn from the consequences of their own choices (but not to be set up for failure by parental withholding of information, by a challenge beyond their developmental capabilities, by parental urges toward competition, etc.), and recommendations that parents be available as resources and support if needed, or for guidance, information, or perspectives.

Values

In quantity, the values dimension is given a medium amount

of attention by each cohort, by each gender, and in terms of rearing both sons and daughters. The content and methods of values responsibilities recommended, however, change and expand dramatically across cohorts and genders, and for rearing both sons and daughters.

Male respondents in the elderly cohort clearly and consistently recommend parental exhortation and values indoctrination of children of both sexes but particularly daughters. All responsibility for everyone's behavior is placed on daughters--for her own, for that of siblings in her care as a child, and for her husband's and her children's when she is an adult. Females are held responsible for all birth control, seductions ("Women are responsible for men's lies because they believe them") or rapes, the behavior of their husbands, how their children turn out, etc. They are constantly told by the exhorting elderly male cohort (whose primary parental responsibility in both the maturity and the values dimensions appears to be to exhort) that the proper way to accomplish all of this well is to be good and to do everything the way it should be--which are also defined exclusively by the elderly male cohort.

The church is enlisted as a huge part of how this is to work: "Go to church every Sunday," "the whole duty of man [and certainly woman] is to fear God," "your sins will find you out," "Christian morals are the basis of all education," etc. The primary aim of every good female is held to be to "preserve the

family," which includes forgiveness of husbands whenever and as often as that is required to preserve the family. Noble suffering, in silence, is the greatest female achievement possible or valued.

Sex-role stereotypes, biases, and restrictions are vigorously promoted (e.g., "don't treat sons like sissies," "the mother must [respondent's italics] stay home all the time") and prejudice is recommended (e.g., "keep them [children] away from the Coloreds"). Total loyalty to parental views and family unity, and immediate and complete compliance with parental dictum round out the definition of a good child. Acknowledgement of parental wisdom is also expected, and gratitude for being so loved. Parental responsibility consists of indoctrinating these values successfully. The only difference between male and female respondents in the elderly cohort is that females occasionally also suggest that parents should "practice what they preach," and males do not.

As in the maturity dimension, the middle-aged cohort recommends radical changes in both outcome and method in the values dimension of parenting. They take exception both to the values suggested and to values indoctrination. Both male and female respondents reject the elderly cohort's view of females: "Encourage women's equality and racial equality," "teach respect for women as human beings equal in status," "avoid sex roles," "teach sons also things about cooking and cleaning before they leave home," "don't have double standards in dating," "teach her

to value herself as a girl," "take daughters seriously too," and even "be nonsexist."

The middle-aged cohort recommends that parents not use children for their own needs or wish-fulfillment, not compare their children to themselves or one another, and not encourage children to "follow in their father's footsteps." Although they do not object to patriotic, family, or group loyalties, they suggest that parents encourage larger interests too, such as "respect for the environment."

The emphasis on personification of the church as an elderly male lessens in the middle-aged cohort, and changes to emphasis on its principles, such as the Golden Rule. This cohort recommends that parents encourage "basic beliefs" and "nurture her spiritual aspect," but also that children, even females, be given "the freedom to choose whatever church they want to go to or not go at all--their choice."

The young cohort wants considerable change even in addition to the profound changes recommended by the middle-aged cohort. The young cohort emphasizes choice even more than the middle-aged cohort does. Consistent with their recommendations in other parenting dimensions, this generation stresses parental responsibilities of providing information, models, experiences, and learning opportunity to facilitate values development and choices by children. The young cohort very much wants values clarification for children, not values indoctrination, and believes children capable of and desirous of wise choice,

especially with facilitation.

The overwhelming destructiveness of incest is mentioned more frequently than in any other cohort. Psychological abuse is also more frequently decried than in any other cohort.

In the Minnesota sample, both sexes of the young cohort articulate and stress every parenting behavior in the values dimension in Table 2. In addition, this is the first cohort to pay considerable attention to the issue of values as something important to consider frequently in parenting, rather than simply naming values they believe parents should have or instill in children.

Another change between the middle-aged and young cohorts, at least in the Minnesota sample, is open acknowledgement, acceptance, and support of the desirability of increased sensitivity in males. It is considered extremely important to child-rearing that fathers be sensitive, psychologically available, and capable of participating in sustained loving relationships with spouse and children. It is also considered very important in this cohort, for the first time, that sons be reared to develop these capabilities as human beings. These capacities are no longer considered inappropriate to the male gender, unimportant, or beyond the potential of male experience.

As noted earlier, although this is only evident in the Minnesota sample, this is thus the first cohort whose recommendations specify a belief in the potential of males for significant sensitivity, psychological availability, and true

relationship intimacy. The belief and the recommendations are particularly emphasized by young-cohort female respondents in the Minnesota sample, but are also stressed by some young-cohort Minnesota males, and are noted in other ways by these young males in the communication dimension. This is a dramatic change and may have profound consequences to the generation reared by this cohort, if the young cohort is correct and if their own parenting behaviors are congruent with what they are recommending.

The female respondents of the young cohort are distinct from the males in one emphasis in the Illinois sample and three emphases in the Minnesota sample: The emphasis young female respondents in both geographic locations share is their continued insistence on issues important to women seeking gender equality. Females in this cohort are as vigorously vocal about parenting without gender stereotypes and biases as females in the middle-aged cohort are on the same issues, and as males in the middle-aged cohort are on maturity issues. The intensification of the same recommendations made by the middle-aged female cohort, rather than simple continued support of previously named behaviors or expansion of supported areas, suggests that the young female cohort perceives, and feels urgently, that these changes are yet to be made in actuality.

In the Minnesota sample, a second additional contribution the female respondents of the young cohort make to the values parenting dimension is the recognition of the destructiveness to children of falseness, artificiality, and superficiality, and the

importance of being aware of the relationship of ingenuousness to the whole issue of values. This recognition is similar and parallel to the focus on genuineness and honesty in the communication dimension by the females of the young cohort, and is taken very seriously by them.

A third contribution of young-cohort females in the Minnesota sample is a frequent congruence of high-level parenting behaviors across several dimensions as the young female generation emphasizes values clarification and living and encouraging the living of one's own values with recommendations and many examples in other dimensions also. The females of the young cohort not only recommend developing the "whole" child but also that it be accomplished by quality parenting that allows for it in all dimensions, because doing that allows for, encourages, and facilitates children's choice of their own concepts of self, values, attitudes, identity, behavior, etc.

Conclusions

Across all dimensions, the general pattern is that the middle-aged cohort makes changes through some disagreement with the elderly cohort who reared its generation, and the young cohort makes additions and expansions which extend and build from changes the middle-aged cohort began.

Responses from the middle-aged cohort generally indicate that they want things to be different, sometimes at an opposite pole, from how the elderly cohort want them, although they are infrequently able to specify how recommended parenting could be

accomplished.

Responses from the young cohort, especially in the Minnesota sample, indicate that they generally agree with the middle-aged cohort's recommendations, but go on to recognize many more aspects of the issues and to specify and exemplify what accomplishments make things different, and how to achieve them.

Although most cohort changes toward increased psychological availability, sensitivity, facilitation, and other constructive parenting as indicated by current research occur for both genders, constructive developments continue to be more greatly emphasized by females.

Amount of formal education also appears positively correlated with constructive parenting.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Elderly (MN/IL) Male	Elderly (MN/IL) Female	Middle-Aged (MN/IL) Male	Middle-Aged (MN/IL) Female	Young (MN/IL) Male	Young (MN/IL) Female
Marital Status:						
Never Married	3/ 1	0/ 0	1/ 0	1/ 0	16/18	19/12
Married	20/20	11/17	17/28	20/22	13/ 9	8/15
Separated	1/ 0	0/ 0	3/ 0	0/ 1	0/ 0	0/ 0
Divorced	1/ 2	2/ 3	7/ 2	7/ 5	1/ 3	3/ 3
Widowed	5/ 7	17/10	2/ 0	2/ 2	0/ 0	0/ 0
Parental Divorce or Death before Adulthood	4/ 4	8/ 5	5/ 6	5/ 5	4/12	5/ 8
Mean Age	72/68	73/66	50/45	47/44	26/25	24/25
Mean Years of Schooling	12/12	11/12	13/13	13/13	15/13	15/13
Mean Age When Left Home	21/19	20/20	18/19	18/18	19/20	20/19
Mean Number of Children:						
Family of Origin	5/ 5	6/ 4	6/ 5	4/ 4	3/ 3	4/ 3
Own Family	3/ 3	3/ 3	3/ 2	3/ 2	1/ 1[a]	1/ 2[a]

[a]Averaged across the 26/30 of the 60/60 respondents who had been or are married, parents, or both.

Table 2.

Parenting Behaviors Considered Important in Child-Rearing, in Five General Dimensions.

Dimension	Parenting Behavior
Maturity	
	Being mature, responsible, and dependable versus being immature, irresponsible, and undependable.
	Encouraging responsibility versus neglecting to do so or supporting irresponsibility.
	Encouraging individuality versus conformity and compliance.
	Encouraging age-appropriate independence versus dependence and obedience.
	Encouraging problem-solving versus seeking help automatically or prematurely.
	Encouraging personal decision-making versus reliance on others' instructions or advice.
	Guiding and facilitating development versus controlling and monitoring.
Love	
	Holding realistic versus unrealistic expectations of children.
	Offering guidance, with understanding of developmental issues and limitations, versus not offering guidance or not understanding.
	Spending time with children versus not doing so.
	Tolerating mistakes and supporting in failure versus not doing so.
	Reinforcing where possible versus only punishing when necessary.

Table 2 (continued).

Parenting Behaviors Considered Important in Child-Rearing, in Five General Dimensions.

Dimension	Parenting Behavior
Love (continued)	
	Being psychologically available versus unavailable.
	Feeling and showing love openly versus not feeling it or assuming it is perceived.
	Feeling and showing marital love and support versus not doing so.
Communication	
	Including all family members in decision-making versus decision-making by parent(s) only.
	Being open versus closed emotionally.
	Discussing and allowing discussion of all topics, even difficult ones, versus some subjects' being taboo.
	Considering alternate viewpoints versus not tolerating certain views.
	Checking out assumptions and perceptions versus not doing so.
	Allowing expression of all emotions versus not doing so.
	Being honest versus dishonest verbally and nonverbally, and in expression of emotions.

Table 2 (continued).

Parenting Behaviors Considered Important in Child-Rearing, in Five General Dimensions.

Dimension	Parenting Behavior
Discipline	
	Having clear and straightforward rules, and giving reasons, versus being ambiguous or arbitrary.
	Allowing participation of all family members in deciding rules versus not doing so.
	Providing parental agreement versus conflicting parental rules.
	Being consistent and impartial versus inconsistent and/or favoring one or more children.
	Being neither too harsh not too lenient versus overreacting or setting inadequate limits.
	Avoiding manipulation through bribery, humiliation, etc., versus manipulating through these or similar methods.
Values	
	Living a personally chosen value system versus not choosing one or living one not personally chosen.
	Modeling it, serving as a "good example," versus acting as though it does not matter.
	Being congruent within it versus "don't do as I do--do as I say."
	Not forcing it on others versus actively encouraging its adoption.
	Actively avoiding sex-role restrictions and biases versus actively encouraging them.
	Not using a child for personal need-fulfillment versus doing so.

Table 3.

Percentages of Parenting Behaviors in Five Parenting Dimensions, by Gender and Cohort, for Rearing Sons and for Rearing Daughters

	Male Respondents (MN/IL)						Female Respondents (MN/IL)					
	Sons			Daughters			Sons			Daughters		
Dimension	Elderly	Middle-Aged	Young	E	M	Y	E	M	Y	E	M	Y
Maturity	37/39	35/31	27/29	34/35	28/30	20/24	35/34	30/32	23/23	33/30	27/27	25/24
Love	27/25	28/35	29/28	18/18	32/30	32/32	33/20	33/29	32/31	26/31	27/30	28/32
Communication	10/10	17/ 9	16/15	12/10	13/11	15/15	10/10	14/12	15/14	11/11	16/16	15/15
Discipline	12/ 7	6/ 9	12/13	13/10	6/12	10/13	12/12	11/ 7	11/ 9	10/10	10/ 9	13/13
Values	14/19	14/16	16/15	23/27	21/17	23/16	10/24	12/20	19/23	20/18	20/18	19/16